

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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P R 130902Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7596
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 2089

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT LE
SUBJ: CURRENT MARONITE OUTLOOK

1. SUMMARY. MARONITE LEAGUE MEMBER PHILIP AL-KHAZEN, A BAROMETER OF THE VIEWS OF OLDER HARD-LINE MARONITE POLITICAL CIRCLES, HOPES THAT LEBANESE PARLIAMENT WILL EFFECTIVELY DISAVOW CAIRO ACCORD WITHIN NEXT TWO WEEKS, AND THAT A NEW MARONITE-SHI'A ALLIANCE WILL PROVIDE BASIS FOR DISPOSITION OF LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN PROBLEM BY FORCE. HE IS COUNTING ON UNIFIL, IF NOT TO DESTROY PALESTINIANS IN THE SOUTH, AT LEAST TO DISPOSE OF PALESTINIAN POLITICAL RATIONALE FOR CAIRO ACCORD. HE COMES CLOSE TO LOOKING FORWARD TO RENEWAL OF WAR BETWEEN THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS, WITH ISRAELIS LENDING A HELPING HAND IN NEUTRALIZING POSSIBLE SYRIAN SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIANS. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF MET WITH PHILIP AL KHAZEN FORMER DEPUTY AND
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MARONITE LEAGUE MEMBER (WHO ACCOMPANIED MARONITE LEAGUE DELEGATION TO WASHINGTON IN NOVEMBER) APRIL 11. AL KHAZEN AND MARONITE LEAGUE CONSTITUTE IMPORTANT CORE OF HARD-LINE MARONITE OPINION AMONG ESTABLISHED SENIOR EAST BEIRUT BOURGEOISIE, CLOSE IN OUTLOOK TO FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN.

3. PARLIAMENTARY INITIATIVE ON LEBANON'S PALESTINIAN QUESTION. BEIRUT PRESS IN RECENT DAYS HAS REPORTED GATHERING MOVEMENT TO CONVENE PARLIAMENT TO STUDY "PALESTINIAN DOSSIER." INITIATIVE, NOT SURPRISINGLY, IS COMING LARGELY FROM CHRISTIAN DEPUTIES, AND IS SUPPORTED BY CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND PIERRE GEMAYEL. MOVE IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY HOUSE SPEAKER KAMAL ASSAD. SESSION TO DEBATE PALESTINIAN ISSUE HAS BEEN SET BY ASSAD FOR APRIL 20. AL KHAZEN DID NOT EXPECT OUTRIGHT DENUNCIATION OR REJECTION OF CAIRO ACCORD OF 1969 TO EMERGE FROM PARLIAMENTARY SESSION, BUT "IN SOME FASHION" HE EXPECTED PARLIAMENT WOULD MAKE STATEMENT TO EFFECT THAT PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON WAS NO LONGER MATTER OF JOINT LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT, BUT HAD REVERTED TO DOMAIN OF SOVEREIGN LEBANESE PREROGATIVE.

4. IN AL KHAZEN'S VIEW, MOMENT WAS NOW PROPITIOUS FOR MAJOR LEBANESE EFFORT TO PUT THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON IN THEIR PLACE. KEY FACTOR WAS SHIFT IN SHI'A OPINION. EVERY SHI'A LEADER FROM KAMAL ASSAD TO IMAM MOUSA SADR HAD BY NOW TURNED AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. THIS WAS A TREND WHICH HAD EXISTED BEFORE THE ISRAELI INVASION, AND NOW IT WAS MORE PRONOUNCED THAN EVER. ALTHOUGH IT WAS ISRAELI GUNS WHICH HAD CAUSED THE SHI'A'S TO FLEE FROM SOUTH LEBANON, THEY "KNEW" THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD COME ONLY
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BECAUSE OF THE PALESTINIANS.

5. AL KHAZEN BELIEVED THAT UN RESOLUTIONS 425 AND 426 HAD EFFECTIVELY RELEGATED 1969 CAIRO ACCORD TO THE SCRAP-HEAP OF HISTORY. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT PLO LINE IN NEW YORK AND ELSEWHERE WAS THAT UN RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR REASSERTION OF LEBANESE AUTHORITY IN SOUTH LEBANON DID NOT EXCLUDE REIMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD. AL KHAZEN, IN ADDITION TO STANDARD MARONITE ARGUMENT THAT CAIRO ACCORD WAS NO LONGER BINDING ON LEBANON BECAUSE PALESTINIANS HAD VIOLATED IT, TOOK POSITION THAT UN PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON WOULD MAKE PALESTINIAN ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAEL IMPOSSIBLE. HE SEEMED TO ASSUME THAT THERE WAS EMERGING, FOR A LONG TIME STAY, A BELT OF TERRITORY ALONG THE ISRAELI BORDER WHICH THE ISRAELIS WOULD CONTROL, WITH A BELT UNDER UN CONTROL IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF IT.

6. FURTHER FACTOR IN AL KHAZEN'S VIEW INDICATING THAT THE LEBANESE HOUR OF DECISION ON THE PALESTINIANS HAD ARRIVED WAS WHAT HE CALLED THE NEWIRIT OF THE

LEBANESE ARMY. HE NOTED THAT LEBANESE GENDARMERIE HAD RECENTLY ESTABLISHED ROADBLOCK IN PLACES SUCH AS JUNIEH AND CHEKKA, AND THAT TROOPS IN THE (ALMOST ENTIRELY CHRISTIAN) REGULAR ARMY BARRACKS AT SARBA WERE NOW IN BETTER SHAPE, WITH BETTER MORALE AND SPIRIT THAN A YEAR AGO. THE LEBANESE PEOPLE (BY WHICH HE MEANS THE MARONITES) WERE "READY TO FIGHT."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 2089

7. ISRAEL IS NO LONGER TABOO. EL-KHAZEN SAID HE HAD READ WITH GREAT ADMIRATION A RECENT INTERVIEW (CENSORED IN BEIRUT) OF MAJOR HADDAD (COMMANDER OF LEBANESE CHRISTIAN FORCES IN THE SOUTH) IN LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR IN WHICH HADDAD HAD OPENLY CALLED FOR A LEBANESE ALLIANCE WITH ISRAEL. HE THOUGHT THAT THE SADAT INITIATIVES, AS WELL AS THE ISRAELI INVASION, HAD ENDED THE TRADITIONAL TABOO IN LEBANON ON DEALING OPENLY AND DIRECTLY WITH THE ISRAELIS. HADDAD HAD SAID IN HIS INTERVIEW THAT TWO SHI'A COLONELS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY WERE NOW ACTUALLY TRAINING IN ISRAEL, AND THIS HAD NOT CAUSED AN UPROAR IN BEIRUT. THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE WAS NO LONGER "SACRED."

8. THE NECESSITY OF WAR. IN AL KHAZEN'S VIEW, ALL THESE FACTORS ADDED UP TO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE LEBANESE TO STRIKE WITH FORCE AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT INTERFERE, BECAUSE THE ISRAELIS

DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY WOULD OFFSET THEM. AL KHAZEN
HOPED THAT U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE LEBANESE
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ARMY WOULD BE OF A MAGNITUDE TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO
CLEAN UP ON THE PALESTINIANS.

9. COMMENT: TO THE EXTENT THAT AL KHAZEN'S VIEWS
REFLECT A SHIFT IN PREVAILING OPINION AMONG LEBANESE
FRONT MARONITES - AND WE FEAR THEY DO " IT IS CLEAR
THAT THE MARONITES ARE RETURNING TO A CIVIL WAR FRAME
OF MIND, AND ARE LOSING INTEREST IN POLITICAL RECON-
CILIATION WITH THE MODERATE SUNNI MOSLEM POLITICAL
ESTABLISHMENT. AL KHAZEN SEEMS TO ENVISION A COMBINED
POLITICAL AND MILITARY STRATEGY, WITH THE FIRST STEP
BEING A POLITICAL EFFORT TO ENLIST SHI'A MOSLEM SUPPORT
FOR A HARD-LINE WITH THE PALESTINIANS. THIS IS THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FORTHCOMING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE
IN HIS VIEW. (WE HAVE REPORTED SEPARATELY THAT KARIM
PAKRADOUNI, WHO DOES NOT LIKE THE IDEA, ALSO SAYS
THAT THINKING WITHIN THE LEBANESE FRONT LEADERSHIP NOW
IS TOWARD GAINING SHI'A MOSLEM ALLEGIANCE AND CONFRONT-
ING THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM DIRECTLY.)

10. AS IN THE DAYS BEFORE AND DURING THE LEBANESE
CIVIL WAR, THE GROWING HARD-LINE VIEW SEEMS TO BE
THAT THERE IS A MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN
PROBLEM. THEY APPEAR NOT TO BE DETERRED BY THE FACT
THAT THE BALANCE OF FORCES WITHIN LEBANON BETWEEN
THE PLO AND THE LEBANESE FRONT SUGGESTS
STRONGLY THAT A STALEMATE WOULD RAPIDLY DEVELOP, AS
HAPPENED IN 1976. NOW, AS THEN, THEY ARE COUNTING
ON EXTERNAL SUPPORT, WITHOUT CLEARLY ANALYZING THE
INTERESTS AND THEREFORE THE LIKELY ACTIONS OF
POTENTIAL OUTSIDE SUPPORTERS. A CONSTANT THEME OF
MARONITE LEADERS DURING AND SINCE THE CIVIL WAR WAS THAT
"ARABIZATION" OF THE LEBANESE PEOPLE HAD HELPED THE
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PALESTINIANS AND MADE A MESS OF LEBANON, AND THAT IT
HAD TO BE OFFSET BY "INTERNATIONALIZATION." THEY
SEEM TO THINK THAT THE INSTALLATION OF UNIFIL IN SOUTH
LEBANON IS A MAJOR STEP TOWARDS THAT INTERNATIONALIZATION.
THEY ALSO HOPE THAT U.S. AND ISRAELI SUPPORT
WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN THEIR HAND. WE MAY BE BACK
IN 1975. (ACCORDING TO PIERRE GEMAYEL THERE IS NO

DOUBT THAT WE ARE.)

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